

M. O'Neil Company (O'Neil's Department Store)  
226 South Main Street  
Akron  
Summit County  
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2262

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

M. O'NEIL COMPANY (O'NEIL'S DEPARTMENT STORE)

HABS No. OH-2262

Location: 226 South Main Street  
Akron, Summit County, Ohio  
  
UTM reference - 17.456050.4547500

Present Owner: May Stores Realty Corporation  
(May Department Stores Company)  
611 Olive Street  
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

Present Occupant: M. O'Neil Company

Present Use: Department store

Intended Use: Department store and offices

Significance: The M. O'Neil Company was founded in the late 1800's by Michael O'Neil, who later served as president of the General Tire & Rubber Company. In 1912, O'Neil's was sold to the May Department Stores Company. Construction of the present building in 1928 helped to promote the southern expansion of Akron's Central Business District. The building features a limestone and terra cotta facade, high plaster ceilings with decorative beams and column capitals, and a concrete foundation, and was designed by the prominent Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

1. Dates of Erection: Construction began in early 1927 and was completed in early 1928. Store was opened to public on March 13, 1928.
2. Architect: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White of Chicago, Illinois.
3. Original & Subsequent Dwners: May Department Stores Company has held fee simple title to the property from the date of building construction to present. Deeds to the property are on file with the Summit County Recorder's Office, 175 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio 44308.
4. Builder/Contractor: Carmichael Construction Company of Akron, Ohio. Built at a cost of \$3.1 million.

### B. Historical Context

The M. O'Neil Company is Akron's largest department store chain and was the first company to build a major department store in downtown Akron. Today, O'Neil's downtown store remains the company's flagship store, with 780,000 square feet of floor space, and serves as an anchor for the southern end of Akron's Central Business District. Construction of this six-story building was completed in 1928 at a cost of \$3.1 million. Its construction and the subsequent business success of the O'Neil's department store played a leading role in influencing the expansion and development of Akron's CBD.

The beginning of the M. D'Neil Company dates back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Akron's business center was concentrated in the Howard-Market Street area. In 1877, Michael O'Neil and Isaac J. Dyas opened a small dry goods store, known as O'Neil and Dyas, on the southwest corner of Market and Main Streets. After ten years of successful operation, they had outgrown their original store, and in 1889 they moved their business south of Market Street to Main Street. Their dry goods business continued to prosper at its new location, helping to establish Main Street as a viable business section of downtown.

In 1890, Mr. Dyas died and the name of the firm was changed to M. O'Neil & Company. The scope of the business was also rapidly expanded until O'Neil's became the largest department store in Ohio. In 1912, O'Neil's was sold to the May Department Stores Company of St. Louis, Missouri, its present owner. Mr. O'Neil served the store in an advisory capacity for one year before leaving the firm. Thereafter,

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

B. Historical Context cont'd

Mr. O'Neil remained a prominent member of the Akron community, serving as president of The General Tire and Rubber Company and taking an active role in business, civic, religious, and charitable associations.

Fifteen years after the sale of O'Neil's to the May Company, the M. O'Neil Company was in need of a larger store. Company officials purchased property for a new building several blocks south of the established business district. Construction of the new building began in 1927, and O'Neil's six story, \$3.1 million department store was opened to the public on March 13, 1928.

The new O'Neil's store attracted other businesses to the southern end of Main Street--including Polsky's department store, which remained O'Neil's major competition from its opening in 1930 to its closing in 1978. By the early 1930's, the new Main Street businesses spurred by O'Neil's had extended Akron's business district south to Exchange Street, more than one-half mile from the Market-Main location of O'Neil and Dyas' original dry goods store.

The O'Neil's building was designed in the Renaissance Revival style by the prominent Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, architects of Cleveland's Terminal Tower. O'Neil's Main Street and State Street facades are treated with buff Indiana limestone and terra cotta. These facades are accented by classical motifs detailed in glazed terra cotta, string and belt courses, shallow balconies, and a deep cornice.

Today, the M. O'Neil Company is the only full line department store in Akron. In addition to its downtown store, O'Neil's has expanded to include three branch stores in the Akron area. The downtown O'Neil's, however, remains the company's flagship store and is the only department store in downtown Akron. Moreover, O'Neil's downtown store remains an anchor for the southern end of Akron's Central Business District, the development of which it helped to shape over fifty years ago.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: Facing is Renaissance Revival on two (east and south) exposed elevations. North and west elevations are brick.
2. Condition of Fabric: All exterior surfaces are in good condition. Interior is in very good condition.

### B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: Building measures 217' 6" by 462' 6" and is six stories high.
2. Foundations: Foundations are concrete with no signs of movement.
3. Walls: Exposed elevations (east and south) are limestone on the first and second floors with terra cotta on floors three through six. Remaining walls are brick.
4. Structural System, Framing: Cast-in place concrete frame with one-way concrete joist, in excellent condition.
5. Balconies: Terra cotta shallow balconies on south and east elevations.
6. Openings: East elevation has aluminum framed shop windows on the ground floor. Second story features cast iron framed windows which are divided into four equal spaces, each with panes four high and four wide. The remaining openings on east elevation are single-hung wood windows. All openings on south elevation are single-hung windows. The two brick elevations have steel double-hung windows.
7. Roof: Flat with built-up roofing membrane. Roof is surrounded by a brick and terra cotta parapet.

### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: Attached as Exhibit.
2. Stairways: Stairways are utility in nature. The major vertical transportation is by a system of elevators and escalators.
3. Flooring: Various carpet and resilient finishes except for the first floor which has marble tile. Flooring under resilient finishes is primarily concrete, with some terrazzo.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

C. Description of Interior cont'd

4. Walls: Metal lath and plaster with varying amounts of ornamentation.
5. Decorative Features and Trim: High plaster ceilings with ornament on beams and column caps.
6. Mechanical Equipment: Fan coil units with district steam heating. Remote chiller for air conditioning. Lighting is retrofitted fluorescent.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings

Original building drawings are on file at the M. O'Neil Company, 226 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio 44308.

B. Early Views

Early photographs of the building and site are included in the Summit County Historical Society collection on deposit at the Archival Services Section of the Bierce Library, University of Akron, 302 East Buchtel Avenue, Akron, Ohio 44325.

C. Bibliography

City of Akron, Department of Planning and Urban Development. Akron Historic Landmark Survey, Ohio Historic Inventory form no. SUM-287-16. March 1980.

Grismer, Karl H., Akron and Summit County. Akron, Ohio: Summit County Historical Society, c. 1952.

Letters to David A. Moore from Ronald H. Rasmussen, Ronald H. Rasmussen Associates, July 7, 1983 and September 1, 1983. Letters summarize building surveys of M. O'Neil Company on July 1, 1983 and August 31, 1983.

Summit County Real Estate Office. Tax card no. 800-03-1124-03-005, 1983.

Summit County Tax Map Department, Property Tax Map, Akron, book 3, no. 3-1124.

Summit County Treasurer's Office. Treasurer's Tax Duplicate, 1982, Akron City vol. 36, p. 2873.

D. HABS Preparers

David A. Moore  
City Planner  
Akron Department of Planning and Urban Development  
166 South High Street  
Akron, Ohio 44308

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

D. HABS Preparers cont'd

Ronald H. Rasmussen  
Ronald H. Rasmussen & Associates  
Architects, AIA  
156 South Main Street  
Akron, Ohio 44308

Bruce S. Ford  
Photographer/Graphic Artist  
Akron Department of Planning and Urban Development  
1129 Centran Building  
Akron, Ohio 44308

HABS documentation submitted July 1983, revised September 1983.



PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Federal Agency Involved

Department of Housing and Urban Development

B. Name of Project

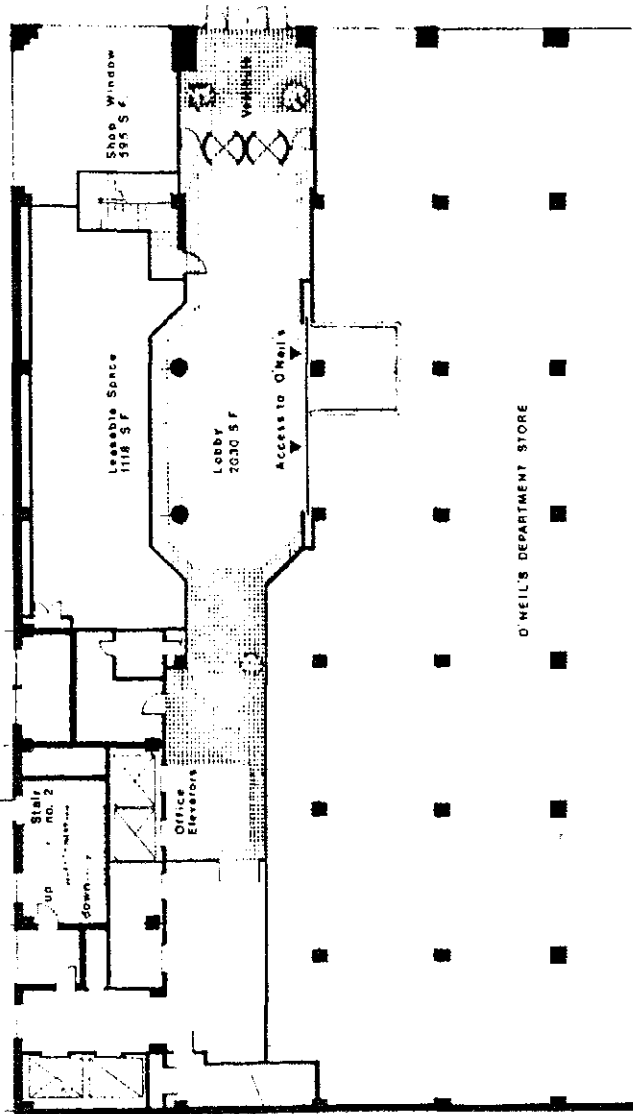
O'Neil's Renovation  
Urban Development Action Grant  
Project No. B-00-AA-39-0157  
Approved 4/27/83

C. Name of Preparers

See Part III, Section D



Main Street



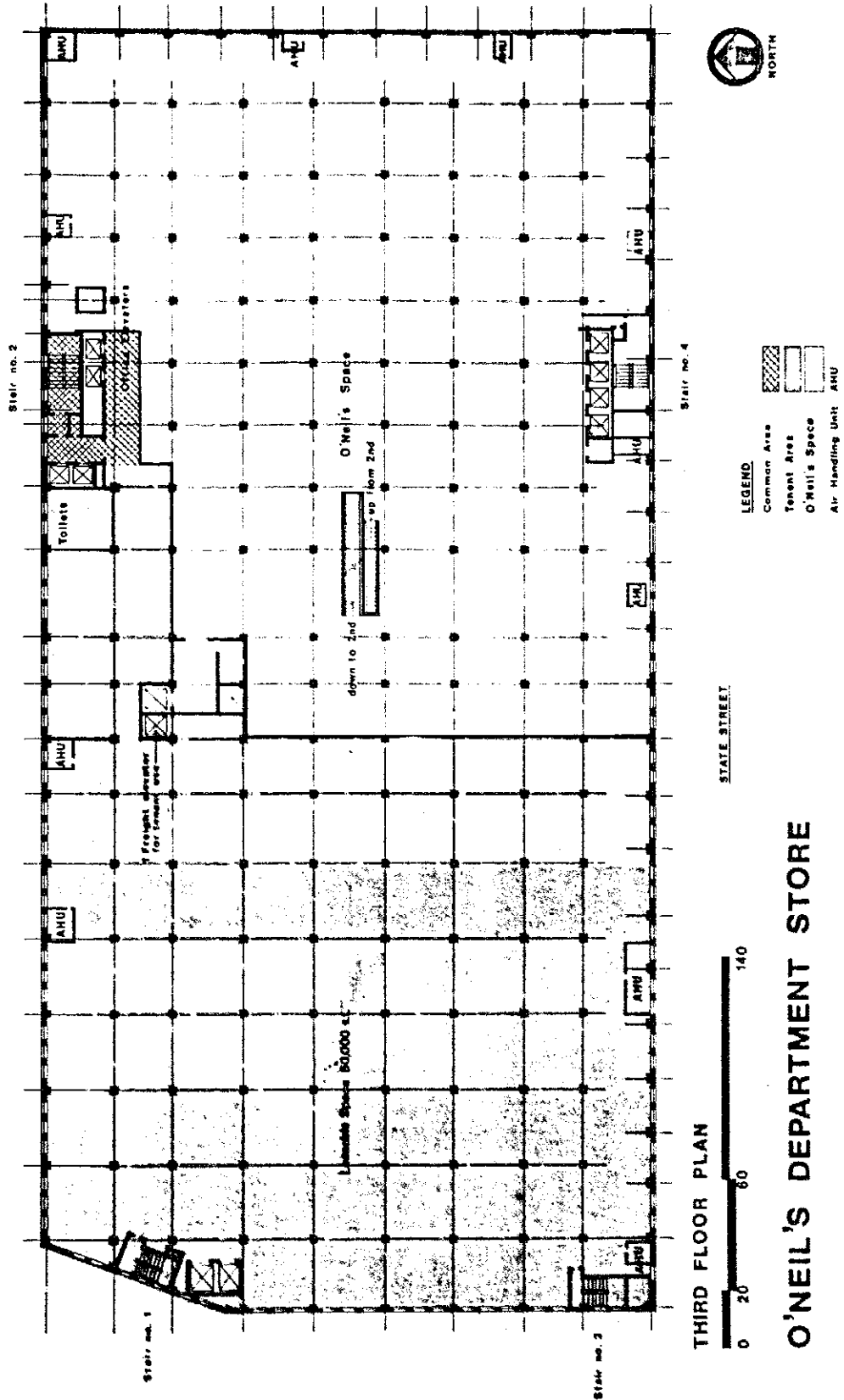
STATE STREET

FIRST FLOOR LOBBY



O'NEIL'S DEPARTMENT STORE

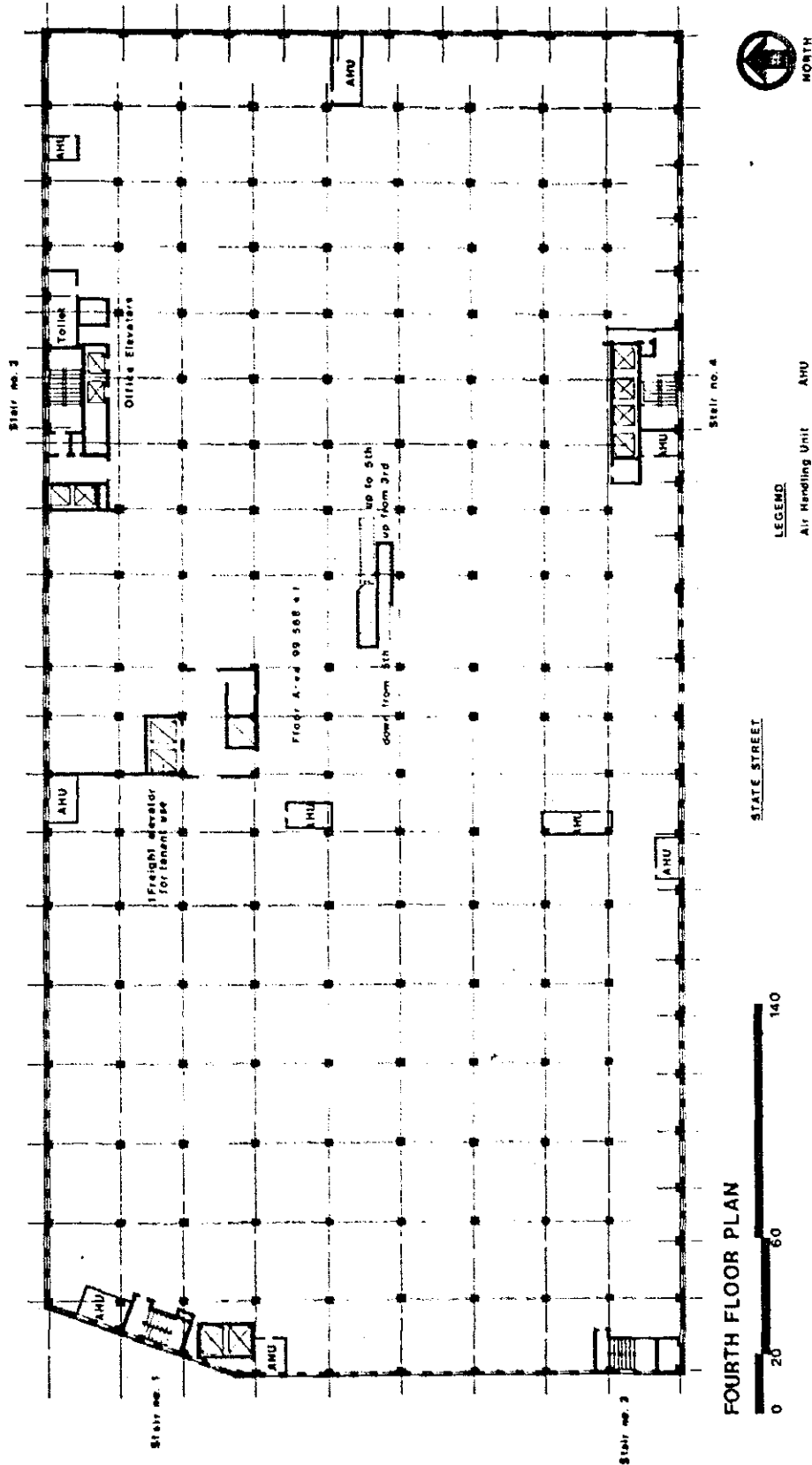
MAIN STREET



THIRD FLOOR PLAN

O'NEIL'S DEPARTMENT STORE

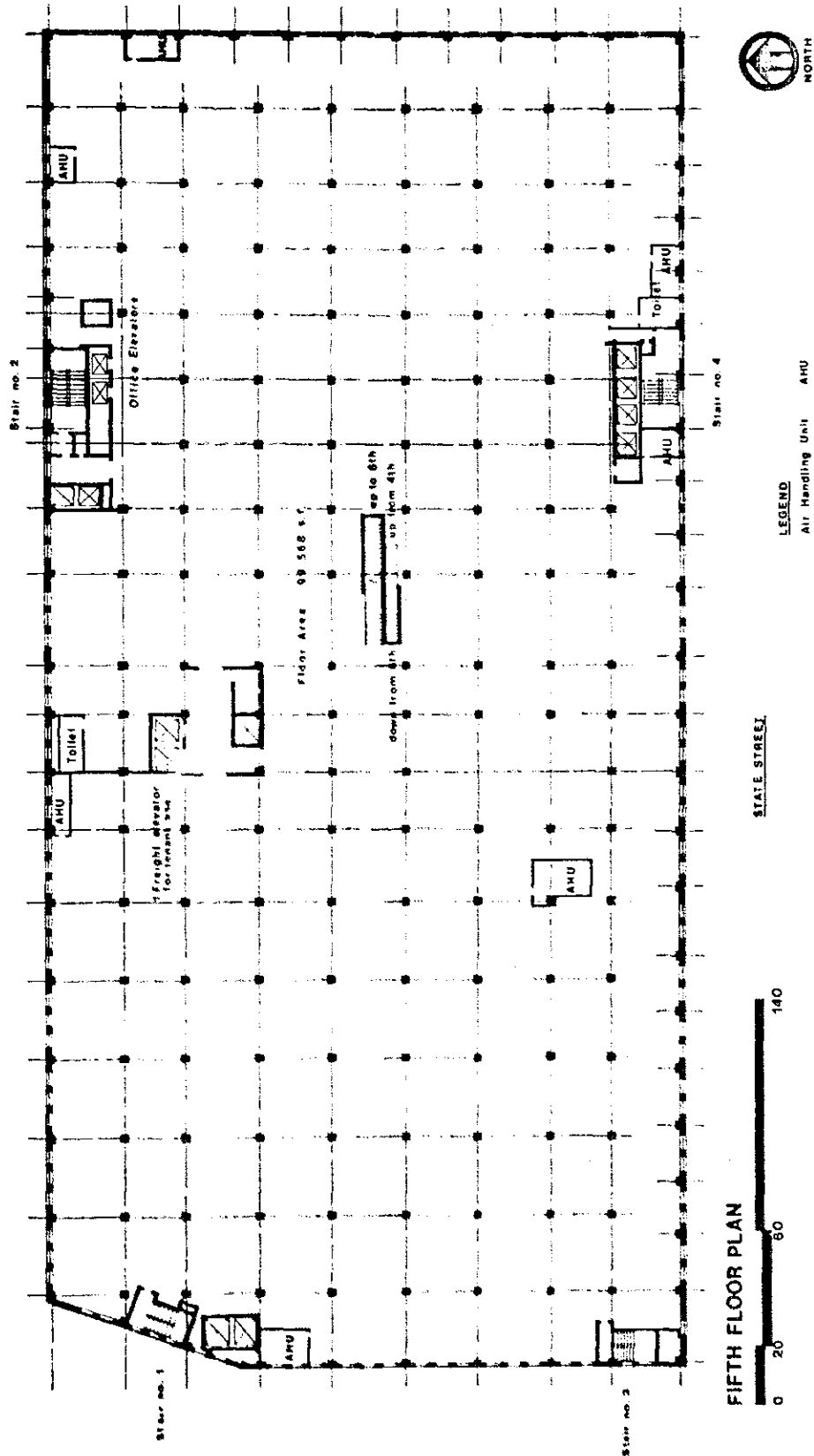
MAIN ENTRANCE



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

O'NEIL'S DEPARTMENT STORE

MAIN STREET



# O'NEIL'S DEPARTMENT STORE

